

Virtually every community wants to promote something special, and maybe unique, about their locale or town. If it's not the first whatever, it's the oldest, largest, smallest, and so on. Mix some community pride with local boosterism and many times one finds a well-meaning claim that falls short of being accurate.

A case in point was a long-standing claim, since resolved a few years ago, that the Dayton school building was the oldest schoolhouse in Nevada. However, Truckee Meadows residents saw it differently. They claimed that the Glendale school, built in 1864 four years before Reno existed, was the oldest extant schoolhouse. The school had operated until 1958 near the Truckee River in Sparks. By 1976, the building had been moved to the Centennial Coliseum grounds (today's Reno-Sparks Convention Center), and since 1994 it presumably has found a permanent home in Sparks' Victorian Square.



Dayton School circa 1870



Reunion of the Glendale Alumni,
Glendale School

The old-timers and newcomers in Dayton sincerely believed their school was older, yet no one seemed to know when it was actually constructed. I was flattered when members of the Dayton Historical Society turned to me for an answer to their question. The answer was chronicled in the pages of the *Lyon County Sentinel*, Dayton's newspaper in the 1860s. Examining the microfilm copies of the *Sentinel* at the State Library & Archives in Carson City, I found that the contract for the schoolhouse was awarded in September 1865 and the school opened in December.

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Clearly, the Glendale school--the first public educational institution in the Truckee Meadows and built shortly before statehood--was a year older than the Dayton school. The Mill Station School, however, still standing on a privately-owned ranch in southwest Washoe Valley, may have been erected in 1861, predating the Glendale school.

I pointed out that the Glendale school had been moved from its original site. If the Daytonites still desired to make a claim--one that could be supported--then why not assert that the school, now home to the local historical society, is the oldest school structure in Nevada still located on its original site.

A little homework can go a long way, and that's a fact!

Photos: Nevada State Museum and the Nevada Historical Society

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